

The Literature Link:

A Series of Lessons
for Teaching Writing
Using Children's Literature



Lessons

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Introduction

This publication is a book of lessons designed to reinforce the features of effective writing. It grew out of the English Language Arts Section's desire to create a bibliography of picture books that would be powerful models for teaching writing to the students of North Carolina.

We thought about the work we have done over the years with teachers and students, the questions we have been asked, the problems we have seen, and what both need to know to achieve effective writing. We have not given credit to any of the lessons, because they can be found in too many different places and formats for us to know their true origins.

Each feature is represented by a unit of sequential lessons for developing student writing skills. Experienced teachers can pick and choose lessons as needed. New teachers can use the lessons as a guide for covering all of the features.

We hope teachers find these lessons and the children's books listed useful. These children's books should be readily available on-line or through a local bookstore.

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Bibliography

(Secondary Features in Parenthesis)

All Features:

Zolotow, Charlotte

The Storm Book

Focus

Cecil, Ivan

dePaola, Tomie

dePaola, Tomie

MacLachlan, Patricia

Teague, Mark

Wood, Audrey

Kirby Kelvin and the Not-Laughing Lessons

26 Fairmont Avenue

Here We All Are

What You Know First

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

Weird Parents

Focus

→ Clear Moment in Time:

Crews, Donald

Martin, Bill

Millman, Isaac

Rylant, Cynthia

Rylant, Cynthia

Teague, Mark

Shortcut—paired with *Bigmama's*

SWISH! (Word Choice)

Moses Goes to a Concert

When I Was Young in the Mountains

The Great Gracie Chase

The Secret Shortcut

Organization

→ Beginning, Middle, Ending:

Cannon, Janell

Finchler, Judy

James, Simon

Lasky, Kathryn

Salley, Colleen

Stewart, Sarah

Swope, Sam

Tsuchiya, Yukio

Wells, Rosemary

Verdi

Testing Miss Malarkey

Dear Mr. Blueberry (Support and Elaboration)

Pond Year

Epossumondas (Transition words)

The Gardener

The Araboolies of Liberty Street

Faithful Elephants

Max's Dragon Shirt

Organization → Beginning:

Clement, Rod	<i>Grandpa's Teeth</i>
Howard, Elizabeth	<i>Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crabcakes Later)</i>
Mayer, Mercer	<i>There's a Nightmare in my Closet</i>
Rylant, Cynthia	<i>Night in the Country</i>
Siebert, Diane	<i>Sierra</i>
Steig, William	<i>Shrek (Word Choice)</i>
Teague, Mark	<i>The Lost and Found</i>
Trivazas, Eugene	<i>The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig</i>
Viorst, Judith	<i>The Tenth Good Thing About Barney</i>

Organization → Ending:

Bunting, Eve	<i>Fly Away Home</i>
Bunting, Eve	<i>Peepers</i>
Cooney, Barbara	<i>Miss Rumphius</i>
Henkes, Kevin	<i>Julius, the Baby of the World (Beginning, Sentence Variety)</i>
Houston, Gloria	<i>The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree</i>
Rylant, Cynthia	<i>The Relatives Came</i>
Van Allsburg, Chris	<i>The Stranger</i>

Support and Elaboration

Albert, Richard	<i>Alejandro's Gift (Word Choice)</i>
Bunting, Eve	<i>Ghost's Hour, Spook's Hour (Word Choice, Clear Moment)</i>
Govenar, Alan (Ed.)	<i>Osceola: Memories of a Sharecropper's Daughter</i>
Martin Jr., Bill and John Archambault	<i>The Ghost-Eye Tree (Word Choice, Clear Moment)</i>
McDonald, Megan	<i>Insects Are My Life</i>
McKissack, Patricia	<i>Ma Dear's Aprons</i>
Roop, Peter and Connie	<i>Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie</i>

Style → Sentence Fluency:

dePaola, Tomie
Falconer, Ian
Rylant, Cynthia
Rylant, Cynthia

Oliver Button Is a Sissy
Olivia
The Old Woman Who Named Things
Scarecrow (Organization, Word Choice)

Style → Word Choice:

Bunting, Eve
Birdseye, Tom
Edwards, Patricia
Fox, Mem
Frasier, Debra
Johnston, Tony
Lester, Helen
Krull, Kathleen
Martin Jr., Bill
Palatini, Margie
Peet, Bill
Rae, Jennifer
Steig, William
Wilson, Karma
Yolen, Jane
Yolen, Jane
Zolotow, Charlotte

Ghost's Hour, Spook's Hour (Clear Moment)
Look Out, Jack! The Giant is Back! (Clear Moment)
Some Smug Slug
Night Noises
Miss Alaineus (Support and Elaboration)
Amber on the Mountain
Hooway for Wodney Wat (Support and Elaboration)
Wilma Unlimited (Beginning)
Barn Dance
Moostache
Big, Bad Bruce
Dog Tales
Brave Irene
Bear Snores On
Miz Berlin Walks
Owl Moon (Clear Moment)
The Seashore Book

The Features of Effective Writing

Focus

Finding the Focus

- **Writing Feature:** Focus (Support and Elaboration)
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Weird Parents* By Audrey Wood
- **Materials:** none



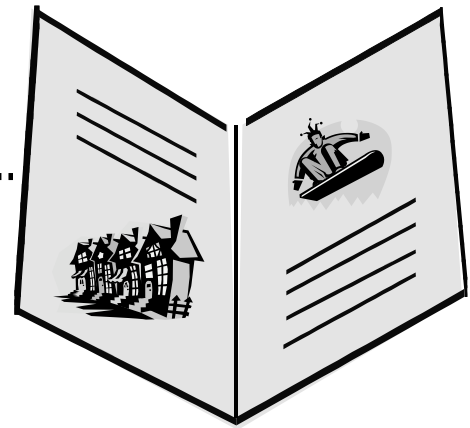
Procedures:

1. Prior to reading this book, the teacher tells the students that he/she is going to read to them without disclosing the title or showing any pictures—and cautions them not to give anything away about the book if they are familiar with the story.
2. The teacher reads the book to the students.
3. After reading the book, the teacher leads the students in a discussion concerning the focus of the book using the following questions to generate ideas:
 - a. Why do you think the author wrote this book?
 - b. What do you think the focus or main idea is?
 - c. What events and details can you name that support your answers?
 - d. What are some similar ideas that you might use as a focus for your own story?

Creating the Focus: Using Wordless Picture Books

- **Writing Feature:** Focus
- **Featured Picture Book:** Any wordless picture book that tells a story
- **Materials:**
 - Chart Paper
 - Markers
 - Small, lined sticky-notes

Procedures:



Activity 1

1. The teacher introduces the book explaining that it is a wordless book.
2. After looking at the entire book page-by-page, the teacher tells the students that they will write a story to match the illustrations.
3. As the teacher and students look at each page, the teacher records sentences decided on by the group that capture the sequence and focus of the story while leaving room for revision.
4. Continue this process until the complete story is written.
5. Ask the class to read the new story together.

Note: Revisions that include adding more support and elaboration can be made as part of a follow-up lesson.

Activity 2

1. Provide wordless picture books for pairs of students and ask them to work cooperatively to write a story as demonstrated in Activity 1 using sticky-notes for each page.

Activity 3

1. Allow students to share their stories.
2. Place books in the reading center or class library where they can be enjoyed.

Additional Wordless Picture Books:

Carl Goes to Daycare
Carl Goes Shopping
Carl Makes a Scrapbook
Carl's Afternoon in the Park
Carl's Birthday
Carl's Masquerade
By Alexandra Day

Do Not Disturb
By Nancy Tufari

Freefall
Sector 7
Tuesday
By David Weisner

Narrowing the Focus

- **Writing Feature:** Focus
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Kirby Kelvin and the Not-Lauding Lessons* by Ivon Cecil
- **Materials:** none

Procedures:



1. The teacher reads the book to the students.
2. The teacher directs the students to suggest times that they had a hard time following the rules, like Kirby did.
3. As the students suggest ideas, the teacher records them on the board.
4. After gathering a number of ideas, the teacher goes through the list and guides the students in determining which ideas are focused and which are not.
5. For ideas that are too broad for a single story, the teacher models how to narrow the focus by making the information more precise. For example, if a student says they had a hard time following the rules in school, ask them what were they doing in school and what rules were they to follow?
6. The teacher has the students choose one of the ideas and plan a story they might write on this topic.

Follow-Up:

This activity should be repeated many times using a variety of topics. Ask students if their topic is narrow enough for a single story.

Making a Long Story Short

- Writing Feature: Focus → Clear Moment in Time
- Featured Picture Books: *Bigmama's* and *Shortcut*
by Donald Crews
- Materials: none



Procedures:

1. The teacher reads *Bigmama's* to the class and explains that this book is the author's memoir about summer trips to visit his grandmother. A *memoir* is a memory of something a writer has experienced.
2. The teacher reads *Shortcut* to the class and explains that this book is about one event, a clear moment in time, that took place during one of the visits. Remember in *Bigmama's* when the train goes tooting by?
3. After reading the books, the teacher leads the students in a discussion comparing the time span of each book, one summer or one afternoon.
4. To show understanding of the concept of a clear moment in time, students are directed to write a story focusing on one event that took place during a visit to someone else's house.

Additional Titles
for this writing
feature:

SWISH!

by Bill Martin

***Moses Goes to a
Concert***

by Isaac Millman

***When I Was
Young in the
Mountains***

by Cynthia Rylant

***The Great Gracie
Chase***

by Cynthia Rylant

Writing Memoirs

- **Writing Feature:** Focus → Clear moment in time
- **Featured Picture Book:** *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant
- **Materials:** none

Procedures:



1. Prior to reading the book the teacher writes *memoir* on the board and asks the students if they know what a *memoir* is. What word does it resemble that they do know? (Memory)
2. The teacher explains that a *memoir* is a memory of something a person has experienced and that people sometimes write a series of memories from their lives instead of an autobiography, a story that usually starts with someone's birth and tells about his or her entire life.
3. The teacher explains that *memoirs* can be about:
 - A specific time in a person's life—childhood, college, adulthood, job-related, fame, etc.
 - A place they lived—a different house, neighborhood, town.
 - Time they spent with a group—Scouts, camp, church, school.
 - Phases they have gone through—being scared of the dark, being particular about what or how they ate, having an imaginary friend, sleeping with a special item.

4. The teacher reads the book to the students and asks them what phase of her life Cynthia Rylant writes about, including where she lived and what her life was like.
5. The teacher explains that each *memoir* is a clear moment in time introduced by the repeated line: When I was young in the mountains....
6. The teacher takes one of Cynthia Rylant's memories from this book and leads the students in writing a class story about that moment in time (for example, writing a story about having fun in the mud puddle).
7. Ask students to write memoirs based on the model Cynthia Rylant uses, such as:
 - a. When I was young in primary school....
 - b. When I was young on _____ Street....
 - c. When I was young in (name of a different town)....

Endless possibilities exist for stems!

8. Allow students time to share *memoirs* with partners and/or the class.
9. Encourage students to choose one of their memories and to write a story about that one moment in time.

Personal vs. Imaginative Narrative

- **Writing Feature:** Focus

- **Featured Picture Books:** ***Shortcut***
by Donald Crews

The Secret Shortcut
by Mark Teague

- **Materials:**

Transparency of Personal and Imaginative Narrative Flow Chart (Included)

Truth or Fiction Chart—one per student (Included)

A Prompt (Included)

Procedures:

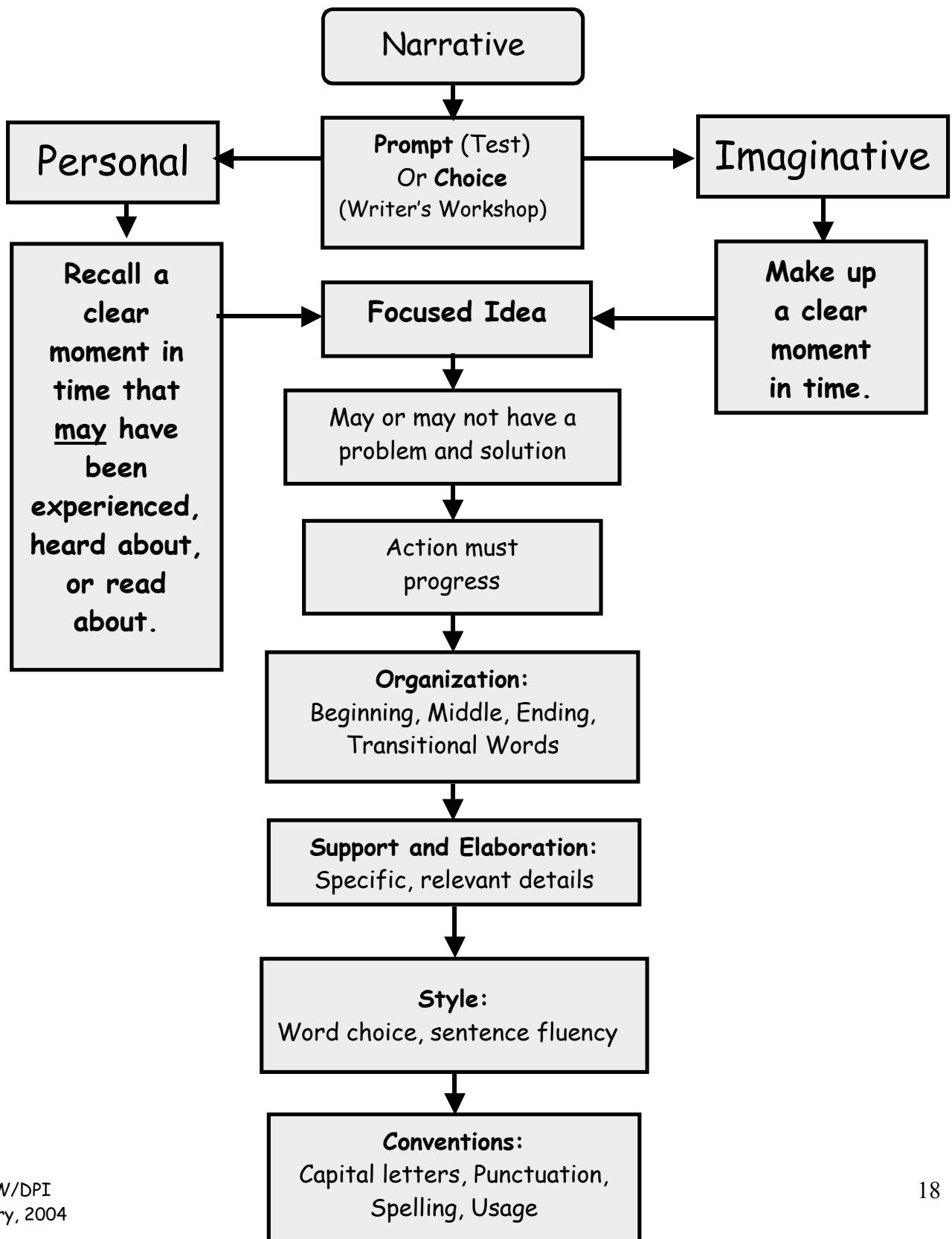


Note: Many students do not see themselves as having interesting or funny stories to tell. There are specific times when telling the truth is important, but teaching students to add details using the Truth or Fiction Chart should help them understand how to improve on the ordinary since the purpose of narrative writing is to entertain the reader.

1. The teacher introduces the flow chart and explains the commonalities between the two types of narrative writing.
2. After discussing the flow chart, the teacher reads both featured books to the students. After reading them, she asks the students to tell her what each book is about and how the books are alike and different. (*Shortcut* is a personal narrative about an event in the author's life that really happened. The *Secret Shortcut* is an imaginative narrative made up by the author.)

3. The teacher goes back to the flow chart to read the section that shows the one difference between personal and imaginative writing. Then she will ask the students if they can find a clue showing that even in this area the two are not that different. Imaginative narratives are made up, but personal narratives can be about something they have experienced, heard or read about. In other words, even a personal narrative can be made up or embellished in order to entertain the reader.
4. The teacher records ideas of story topics on the board. She leads a discussion with the students as to which topic would make the best story. Next the students select one of the topics for their story.
5. Using the Truth or Fiction Chart and their selected topic, the students write ideas for a personal narrative in the "Truth" column. Next the students write additional ideas in the "Fiction" column where they make up or embellish the truth to make the story more interesting.
6. The teacher allows students to share details, both truth and fiction, from their charts.
7. The charts may be used as a planning tool for completing a narrative, or only as an example of mixing truth and fiction to entertain the reader.

Personal and Imaginative Writing



Truth or Fiction

Story Topic:

Truth

Fiction

Organization

Defining Good Beginnings

- **Writing Feature:** Organization→ Beginnings
- **Featured Picture Book:** Listed below
- **Materials:**
Chart Paper for reference charts
(See example below)
Markers



Procedures:

1. To teach this lesson, the teacher should gather books and make charts of various strategies authors use for writing beginnings that hook the reader.
2. Suggested picture books to use when discussing strategies for writing beginnings:
 - *Grandpa's Teeth* by Rod Clement—**Dialogue**
 - *Shrek* by William Steig—**Introduces the main character**
 - *Wilma Unlimited* by Kathleen Krull—**Facts**
 - *There's a Nightmare in my Closet* by Mercer Mayer—**Begins with the end**
 - *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crabcakes Later)* by Elizabeth Howard—**Setting**
 - *Night in the Country* by Cynthia Rylant—**Drama**
 - *Duke Ellington* by Andrea Pinckney—**Question**
 - *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivazas—**Traditional "Once upon a time..."**
 - *The Lost and Found* by Mark Teague—**Humor**
 - *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst—**Begins in the middle**

Sample reference chart for Story Beginnings.

Title:	
Author:	
Beginning:	
Strategy:	

Beginnings Scavenger Hunt

- **Writing Feature:** Organization → Beginnings
- **Featured Picture Book:** Use available picture books
- **Materials:**
Story Beginnings Reference Charts created in previous lesson
Beginnings Scavenger Hunt Chart (included)



Procedures:

1. Review reference charts created in the Defining Good Beginnings lesson that introduces different strategies that authors use for writing good beginnings.
2. Using the Beginnings Scavenger Hunt chart, students will search picture books for beginnings using the defined strategies.
3. The students will write the beginnings on the chart and identify the author's strategies.
4. The teacher will check entries for correctness and understanding.
5. This chart may be filed and used as a reference for future writing.

Name _____

Date _____

Beginnings Scavenger Hunt

I found some good beginnings:	I think the author used the following strategy:
Title _____ Beginning:	Author _____ Strategy:
Title _____ Beginning:	Author _____ Strategy:
Title _____ Beginning:	Author _____ Strategy:
Title _____ Beginning:	Author _____ Strategy:
Title _____ Beginning:	Author _____ Strategy:

Writing Good Beginnings: Overcoming the "One sunny day" Syndrome

- **Writing Features:** Organization → Beginning
- **Featured Picture Book:** none
- **Materials:**
Writing Good Beginnings Chart (included)

Procedures:

1. The teacher asks students to select and use three different strategies to create a variety of beginnings for a previously written story in their writing folder.
2. Using the Writing Good Beginnings chart, the students identify three strategies they want to try and write different beginnings that use those strategies.
3. The students share their beginnings with a writing buddy and choose the most effective beginning for their story.
4. This sheet can be filed in the student's writing folder and used as a reference when drafting or as a resource for future revisions.



Name_____

Date_____

Writing Good Beginnings

Prompt:	
Strategy	Attempt
1.	
2.	
3.	

The Mystery Book

- **Writing Feature:** Organization→ Beginning, Middle, Ending
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Max's Dragon Shirt*

by Rosemary Wells

Note: Any inexpensive books without page numbers can be used for this activity. Select several inexpensive books with no page numbers that can be disassembled. Prior to this activity, the teacher should remove each book's pages from its cover. If a paper cutter is available, the pages should be slightly trimmed on both sides to disguise the bound edge from the outside edge. Shuffle the pages and place them into the cover of the book.

- **Materials:**

One prepared book per group
Small sticky notes



Procedures:

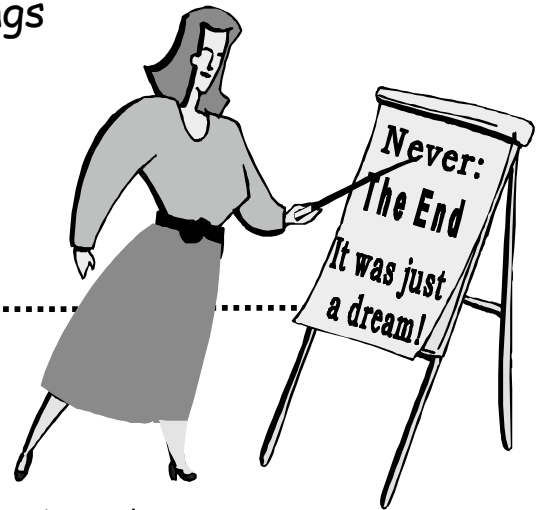
1. Read the book, *Max's Dragon Shirt* to the class. After reading the whole story, revisit each page and have the students point out words or phrases that link one page to the next.
2. Divide the students into groups and provide each group with a book prepared as described above.
3. The object is to work as a team to put the pages in the correct order by using picture and organization clues: what sounds like the beginning, what sounds like the ending, and how the transitional words lead the reader through the middle of the story.
4. Small sticky notes may be helpful in keeping the pages in order.
5. Allow each group to line up in order and read the stories aloud to the class.

Defining Good Endings

- **Writing Feature:** Organization→ Endings
- **Featured Picture Books:** Listed below
- **Materials:**

Chart Paper (See example below)
Markers

Procedures:



1. To teach this lesson, the teacher should gather books and make charts of various strategies authors use for writing appropriate endings.
2. Model and discuss strategies for writing effective endings using the following picture books:
 - *Grandpa's Teeth* by Rod Clement—**Element of surprise**
 - *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree* by Gloria Houston—**Summary**
 - *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant—**Circular format**
 - *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting—**Poignant ending**
 - *The Stranger* by Chris Van Allsburg—**Mysterious ending**
 - *Peepers* by Eve Bunting—**Lesson learned**
 - *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney—**Something to think about**

Sample Reference Chart for Story Endings

Title:

Author:

Ending:

Strategy:

Endings Scavenger Hunt

- **Writing Feature:** Organization→ Endings
- **Featured Picture Book:** Use available picture books.
- **Materials:**
Endings Scavenger Hunt Chart (included)



Procedures:

1. The teacher reviews good endings by using the reference charts created in the previous lesson.
2. Using the Endings Scavenger Hunt chart, the students search picture books for endings that use the defined strategies.
3. The students write the endings on the chart and identify the authors' strategies.
4. The teacher will check entries for correctness and understanding.
5. This chart may be filed and used as a reference for future writing.

Name _____

Date _____

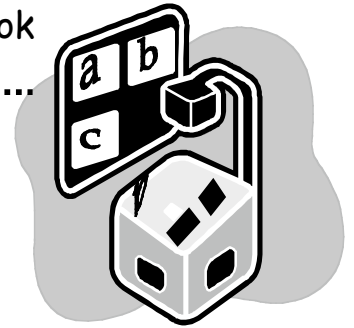
Endings Scavenger Hunt

I found some good Endings:	I think the author used the following strategy:
Title _____ Ending: _____	Author _____ Strategy: _____
Title _____ Ending: _____	Author _____ Strategy: _____
Title _____ Ending: _____	Author _____ Strategy: _____
Title _____ Ending: _____	Author _____ Strategy: _____
Title _____ Ending: _____	Author _____ Strategy: _____

Choosing the True Ending

- **Writing Feature:** Organization→ Endings
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Julius, the Baby of the World*
by Kevin Henkes
- **Materials:**
Transparency of three different endings for this book

Procedures:



1. Prior to the lesson, the teacher prepares a transparency showing three different endings for the featured picture book.
2. The teacher reads the book to the students and stops just before the ending.
3. The transparency is displayed and all three endings are read:
 - a. Lilly yanked Julius from Cousin Garland's hands and screamed, "Get out, you heartless rat!" As soon as Garland was out the door, Lilly put Julius back into his crib and whispered, "I was only kidding with Cousin Garland. You still have a slimy nose. You still have beady eyes, and your white fur is not so sweet."
 - b. Insert real ending here.

c. Lilly yelled at Cousin Garland, "Now get out, and don't bother me again!" "Julius can come in handy," thought Lilly. "I can use him to rid myself of the larger germs in our family."

4. The students are directed to vote on each ending to predict which ending the author actually used.
5. The teacher gives the students the opportunity to discuss each ending and tell why they voted as they did.
6. The teacher resumes reading the text and reveals the true ending of the book.
7. The teacher leads the students in a discussion about why the author might have chosen this ending for the book.

Writing Good Endings

- **Writing Features:** Organization → Endings
- **Featured Picture Book:** none
- **Materials**
 - Writing Good Endings Chart (included)
 - Rough drafts of student writing

Procedures:

1. The teacher reviews strategies for writing effective endings.
2. Using the Writing Good Endings chart and a rough draft from writing pieces in progress, each student identifies three strategies they want to try and writes an ending using each of the strategies.
3. The students read their three endings to a writing buddy and choose the most effective of the three new endings to revise their rough draft.
4. The students share stories and evaluate why the endings selected were the best ones for particular pieces.



Name _____

Date _____

Writing Good Endings

Prompt:	
Strategy	Attempt
1.	
2.	
3.	

Support and Elaboration

Thinking About Details

- **Writing Feature:** Support and Elaboration
- **Featured Picture Book:** *The Storm Book*
by Charlotte Zolotow
- **Materials:**
Chart Paper
Markers
Reviser's Toolbox by Barry Lane (Recommended)



Procedures:

Note: In *Reviser's Toolbox* Barry Lane writes about using the *snapshot* to develop details for a story. The teacher can discuss this technique with students before using this lesson.

1. The teacher reads the book *The Storm Book*.
2. After reading the book, the teacher emphasizes the author's specific use of relevant details to describe the thunderstorm as it approaches the country, the city, the coast, and the mountains. The teacher records these examples on an overhead transparency.
3. Following this discussion, the teacher allows groups of students to work together to brainstorm details appropriate for a snowstorm. Their lists should include specific nouns and verbs, figurative language, and sensory images.
4. The teacher allows all groups to share their ideas with the entire class.

5. After sharing, students select and use ideas from the lists to independently provide a detailed snapshot of a snowstorm at a location of their choosing.

**This exercise may be used to enhance a narrative or as practice in providing support and elaboration.*

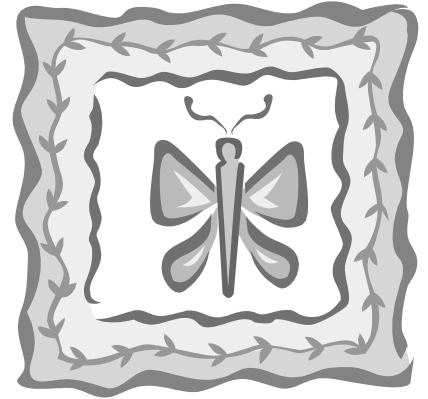
Selecting Relevant Details

- **Writing Feature:** Support and Elaboration
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Insects Are My Life*
By Megan McDonald
- **Materials:** none

Procedures:

1. The teacher reads the book to the class.
2. The teacher asks the students to recall the various bug-related details used by the author. These details can be listed on the board or chart paper. The teacher asks the students to discuss how the details demonstrate an interest or passion for insects.
3. **Assignment:** Students will describe a passion/special interest of their own, selecting relevant and specific details in order to share their knowledge of the subject (e.g. dinosaurs, horses, soccer, talking on the phone, etc.). They may find it helpful to discuss their interests with partners prior to writing.
4. If they wish, they can pattern the piece after the paragraph on page one that begins, "That was the first real clue. . . ."

*Note: This beginning is not intended to be used as a formula beginning. It is just one example.



A Time You Were Scared

- **Writing Feature:** Support and Elaboration
(Focus → Clear Moment in Time)
- **Featured Picture Books:** *Ghost's Hour, Spook's Hour*

By Eve Bunting

Or

The Ghost-Eye Tree

By Bill Martin

Note: Both books focus on a clear moment in time.

- **Materials:** none

Procedures:



1. Prior to reading, the teacher explains that the focus of the book involves a scary event with an abundance of sensory details providing support and elaboration for the story—and that the story takes place in a clear moment in time.
2. Students are directed to listen for sensory details that can be shared at the end of the read-aloud.
3. The teacher reads the book to the students emphasizing the “scary” parts.
4. After reading the book, the teacher records examples of details identified by the students that make the story scary.

5. The teacher then allows groups of students to share memories about times they were scared. Peers should be encouraged to ask questions that prompt for additional information about each student's memory.
6. After sharing in groups, the students write their scary stories, remembering to include sensory details. Student narratives may be shared orally or published in a class book.

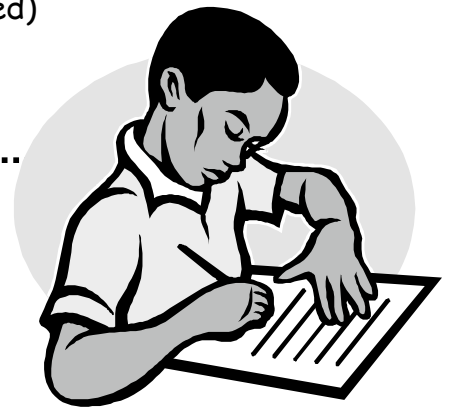


Style

Variety in Sentence Beginnings

- **Writing Feature:** Style→ Sentence Variety→ Sentence Beginnings
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Olivia* by Ivan Falconer
- **Materials:**
 - Transparency of first page of book
 - Transparency of anonymous fourth grade paper (included)
 - Marker
 - Sentence Beginnings Worksheet (included)

Procedures:



Activity 1

1. The teacher reads the book to the class.
2. The teacher leads the students in a discussion concerning the importance of varied sentence beginnings in making a story interesting to the reader.
3. The teacher uses the overhead transparency of the first page of the book to model underlining the first four words of each sentence making sure that students understand the difference between sentences and lines on the paper.
4. The teacher points out the varied sentence beginnings.

5. The teacher places the transparency of the anonymous fourth grade paper on the overhead.
6. Using the Sentence Beginnings Worksheet, the students record the first four words of the first ten sentences.
7. Students work in pairs to make changes in sentence beginnings that sound too much the same.
8. The teacher allows students to share changes made to the sentence beginnings.

Activity 2

Students apply this strategy to a piece of their own writing.

Name _____

Date _____

Sentence Beginnings Worksheet

- Write the first 4 words in each of the first ten sentences.
- If you find the same first word(s) too many times, make changes.

Original Sentence Beginnings	Changed Sentence Beginnings
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Variations in Sentence Length

- Writing Feature: Style → Sentence Variety → Sentence Length
- Featured Picture Book: *Julius, The Baby of the World*
by Kevin Henkes

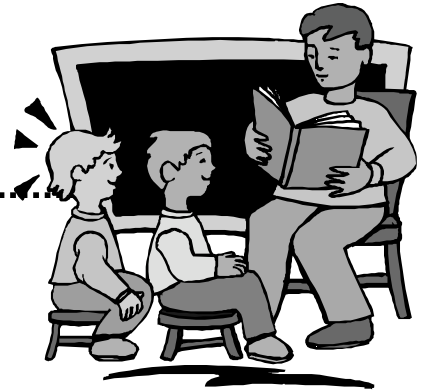
- **Materials:**

Transparency of page 8 (starts with "Lily had to share....")

Transparency of anonymous fourth grade paper (included)

Marker

Rough drafts or finished papers



Procedures:

1. The teacher reads the book to the class.
2. After reading the book, the teacher leads the students in a discussion concerning the importance of varied sentence lengths in making the story interesting to the reader.
3. The teacher uses the overhead transparency to model counting the words in each sentence and recording them in the margin of the paper.
4. The teacher points out the different numbers of words in each sentence.
5. The teacher places the transparency of the anonymous fourth grade paper on the overhead.
6. Together they count the number of words in the first ten sentences, and the teacher records the numbers in the margins of the paper.

7. The class looks for patterns of sentences about the same length. The teacher reads those sentences, and the class discusses how those sentences sound (often choppy or too wordy). The teacher models how to combine short choppy sentences or how to split long, wordy sentences. The goal is to achieve variety in sentence length.
8. Students apply this strategy to their own writing.

Fourth Grade Paper:

Rocking Chair in Mall

One day I was shopping at Eastland Mall with my mom. Mama saw a friend and they started to chat. I looked around for something to do. I saw a comfy looking rocking chair, so I sat down and began to rock. I closed my eyes enjoying the chairs comfort. When I opened my eyes, I was in the one place I always wanted to be, the sky! I began to try to navigate the chair to the right. Before I could do anything, it moved to the right. It didn't take me long to learn that I only had to think which way I wanted to move to go that way. I had been floating through the air a while when I saw a girl crying. I flew down to her and asked what was wrong. "My puppy ran away," she cried out, "and who knows what happened to him." "Don't worry," I assured her "I will find your pup." She gave me a description of the pup, telling me he was black with brown spots. I said bye and headed off to find the pup. I navigated here and there trying to find something that fitted the description. I twisted and turned determined to find the pup. I ended up landing in the Frightening Forest when I saw a rotwiller puppy. It was about to get pounced on from behind by a Jaguar. But I swooped in just in time to save the puppy from near death. I flew back to return the pup. I gave the girl back her puppy then suddenly remembered my mom "Oh no" I said to myself. I closed my eyes and thought about getting back to my mom. When I opened my eyes I was back. I hopped out the chair and ran back to my mom. I reached her just as she was finishing her conversation. "So you wanna finish up shopping?" asked my mom turning to me. "Sure" I replied with a knowing look on my face.

Vocabulary in Context

- **Writing Feature:** Style→ Word Choice
- **Featured Picture Book:** **The Seashore Book**
by Charlotte Zolotow
- **Materials:**
Two anonymous student papers (included)
Chart Paper and Marker

Procedures:

1. The teacher shows the book to the students and reads only the title.
2. The teacher asks the students to think of words that they would expect to find in a book about the seashore. As the students make suggestions, the teacher writes the words on chart paper while encouraging them to make specific suggestions.
3. After reading the book to the class, the teacher and students revisit the chart to see if any of the words suggested were mentioned.
4. The teacher tells the students that they will hear two student papers and points out that one paper received a higher score than the other one. After hearing the papers, students will decide which paper received the better score and why.



5. The teacher leads the students in a discussion about the importance of word choice and using vocabulary in context. The students work together in groups to improve the second paper and share their completed products with the class.
6. The students choose a current piece of writing to revise using word choice appropriate to the context of the paper.

Working With an Author's Words

- **Writing Feature:** Style → Word Choice
- **Featured Picture Book:** **Wilma Unlimited** by Kathleen Krull
- **Materials:**
 - Transparency of Page 34, beginning with "Her ears... and ending with "...gold medal."
 - Use blanks in place of the following words: *buzzed, chanting, ignore, crack, surge, tornado, earned.*
 - Transparency of the above passage with the blanks filled in with the correct words

Procedures:

1. The teacher shows the students a copy of the book and briefly tells them who and what the story is about.
2. The teacher explains that the students are going to work with a passage from the book and attempt to imitate the author's style.
3. The teacher uses the overhead transparency and directs the students to fill in the blanks with words they think are appropriate to the story.
4. After the students have completed filling in the blanks, the teacher allows time for them to share words they used to complete the passage.



5. After students have shared, the teacher uses the second transparency with the blanks filled in with the author's words to compare student word choice with the author's word choice.
6. The teacher leads the students in a discussion concerning the importance of word choice in showing the action as the author intended. Some of the student word choices may be comparable, and others will be good examples of words that are weak. After the activity, the teacher reads the book to the class.

Appropriate Uses and Variations of "Said"

- **Writing Feature:** Style → Word Choice
- **Featured Picture Book:** *Brave Irene*
by William Steig
- **Materials:** none

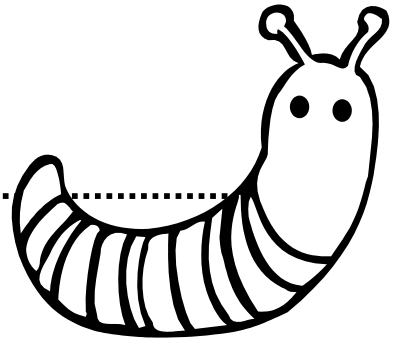
Procedures:

1. The teacher reads the book to the students.
2. After reading the book, the teacher leads the students in a discussion about other words for *said*, as well as when *said* is the appropriate word (such as in normal conversation where variations to express feelings or actions are not necessary).
3. The teacher rereads examples of dialogue from the book and discusses the author's choice of variations of *said*. (Synonyms for *said* seem to represent the speaker's emotion.)
4. The teacher models inappropriate examples such as:
 - a. "Did you break my favorite lamp?" Mother giggled.
 - b. "I love you," Mother screeched as she tucked me into bed.
 - c. "Did you put my tools back?" Dad stated.
5. Students suggest more appropriate *said* words for the sentences above. Place synonyms for *said* on cards.
6. To assess their understanding, have students write three sentences using dialogue. Ask them to place a blank line where the *said* word would go. Let the students take turns drawing a card that has a synonym for *said*. They discuss with their writing buddy if the *said* word fits the meaning of any of their sentences.



Alliteration

- **Writing Feature:** Style→ Word Choice
- **Featured Picture Book:** ***Some Smug Slug***
By Patricia Edwards
- **Materials:**
Dictionary/Thesaurus



Procedures:

1. The teacher reads the book to the students. After reading the book, the teacher asks the students if they recognized anything special about this story.
2. The teacher defines *alliteration* and asks students to remember any examples of alliteration in *Some Smug Slug*.
3. The teacher directs the children to work in pairs and select an animal for their own alliterative version of *Some Smug Slug* or a different story using alliteration.
4. Using the dictionary and thesaurus, the students make a list of appropriate and specific words starting with the same letter as their selected animal.
5. Students should be discouraged from choosing letters that will pose difficulty in their work.
6. After creating a word list, the students write their stories using as many alliterative words as possible.

7. The teacher allows time for students to share their alliterative stories.

Reinforcing the Features of Effective Writing

Writing Feature: All

Featured Picture Book: **The Storm Book**
by Charlotte Zolotow

Materials: none

Procedures:

Note: The teacher decides whether to do this in one lesson or as a series of lessons.



1. The teacher reads the book to the students.
2. After reading the book, the teacher connects the features of effective writing to the story.
 - **Focus:** A storm
 - **Support and Elaboration:** Notice the specific and relevant details describing the storm as it approaches the country; the storm in the city, the coast and the mountains; after the storm.
 - **Organization:** Note the beginning—the approach, middle—during the storm, ending—after the storm. Ask the students if they can determine the end of the beginning and the beginning of the ending. Identify transitional words.
 - **Style:**
 - **Word Choice:** Notice the vocabulary related to a storm, the active verbs, specific nouns, and the figurative language.

- **Sentence Fluency:** Notice how the beginning sentences are simple in structure. They seem to plod along like the heaviness of the air before the storm. As the storm takes place, the sentences become longer and create a storm of words as read aloud. At the end, things slow back down as the storm moves on.
- **Sentence Beginnings:** Notice the variety of sentence beginnings.

3. The teacher tells the students that these features are important to authors, and they will be learning more about each one in order to incorporate them into their own writing.